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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [KCRM](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: TURKEY: ERGENEKON ARRESTS AND MILITARY SUCCESSION
PROCESS

REF: A. ANKARA 1194
[1](#)B. 07 ANKARA 1970
[1](#)C. 06 ANKARA 4894

Classified By: Pol-Mil Counselor Carl Siebentritt for
reasons 1.4 (b,d).

[1](#)1. (U) The Turkish General Staff's (TGS) official reaction to the July 1 "Ergenekon" arrests (ref a), which netted two retired army four-star generals and other former military personnel, has been limited to an official website posting clarifying that searches of military property related to the arrests were conducted according to law by military personnel, not civilian police, with the participation of a public prosecutor. Land Forces Commander and CHOD-apparent Gen Ilker Basbug told journalists July 2 that "we are living through difficult days in Turkey. We must all act with commonsense, care and responsibility." He denied press reports that he had discussed the arrests with Prime Minister Erdogan during their June 24 meeting, chiding the press for publishing "conspiracy theories" aimed at undermining the unity and integrity of the armed forces. The Prime Ministry issued a similar denial, describing as "deliberate fabrications" allegations that Erdogan and Basbug discussed the arrests.

[1](#)2. (SBU) The arrests come a month ahead of the August meeting of the Supreme Military Council (YAS), which will decide on the promotion and assignment of the most senior TGS leaders, as well as on expulsions of military officers for excessive piety, corruption, or other "unbecoming" activities. As chairman of the YAS, the prime minister is expected to agree to recommendations, formulated in advance by the military, which are then subject to the president's approval. Basbug is expected to be anointed CHOD during the YAS, while there are several candidates for the Deputy CHOD position. Other assignments to major commands made at the YAS will indicate who future top commanders will be.

[1](#)3. (C) Political upheaval, including a possible closure decision against the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), could complicate this military succession process. It is likely the military's low key response to the arrests is an indication it wants to avoid jeopardizing a smooth transition and may prefer that an AKP closure decision occur after the YAS. It is also not in the interest of the Erdogan government to further complicate its own precarious situation by opposing the military's choices for top positions, a move that would exacerbate already high tensions. There is some speculation that Erdogan's June 24 meeting with Basbug, reportedly to discuss security matters, was a signal the government will not oppose Basbug's promotion to CHOD. In 2006, the YAS announced Gen Yasar Buyukanit's selection as

CHOD on the first day of meeting, widely seen as reflecting Erdogan's desire to ensure a non-contentious military leadership succession (ref c).'

14. (C) All are awaiting the closure case decision and its timing, and publication of the evidence against the Ergenekon suspects, as indicators of the degree of political tension Turkey will experience in the coming weeks.

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